

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

21 MARCH 2017

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of some of the key issues facing the Council in relation to homelessness, and outlines the work required to prevent and alleviate homelessness and in particular activities to support young people.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members approve the re-direction of £30k per annum previously identified for the Foyer project. This will be to support the Housing Options team with a new role providing housing support to young people and implement and manage the new requirements of forthcoming Homelessness Prevention Bill.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 At the Previous CSA meeting a decision was made regarding the Foyer Project. At the same meeting a homelessness update report was presented to outline the work and difficulties facing the Housing Options team. Regardless of the financial and operational business case for the Foyer, we need to continue look at how we will support those young people that require housing today and in the future.
- 3.2 With homelessness rising and resources to tackle homelessness declining, A new role will be recruited within the Housing Options team to support young people with their housing choices and support the team in implementing the forthcoming Homelessness Prevention Bill, which is expected Summer 2017.
- 3.3 The new officer will work with a number of agencies and partners to support young peoples housing choices including:
- Work with young people currently on the housing register.
 - Advise students at the Learning Hub of their future housing options.
 - Provide intense support to young people presenting as homeless.
 - Support young people facing difficulties at home.
 - Support young families into private sector housing.
 - Work closely with our co location partners and Me & My Learning.
- 3.3 An examination of the current housing register showed there to be 81 young people households under the age of 25 on the housing register, however as the table below show the majority of these households were couples, lone parent or pregnant households (60%).
- 3.4 After discounting five couple households, (who would not be able to live together in a foyer scheme) there were only 33 households were single and childless/not pregnant. Two of these single person households were also discounted as being unsuitable for a foyer scheme because one was a vulnerable person with learning disabilities and the other required overnight accommodation for his children. This left just 31 single person households.

Household Type	Low Housing Need	Medium Housing Need	High Housing Need	Priority Housing Need	Total
Couple		4	1		5
Couple/lone parent + 1 other	7	9	11	6	33
Couple/lone parent + 1 other	6	8	6	4	24
Couple/lone parent + 1 other/Pregnant	1	1	5	2	9
Couple/lone parent + 2 others	2	3	1		6
Couple/lone parent + 3 others				1	1
Single	2	28	1		31
Single pregnant		2		1	3
Single Person marked Supported		1			1
Single person with access to children			1		1
Grand Total	11	47	15	8	81

3.8 The remaining 31 households who were single were then looked at in more detail.

- Two households are MBC tenants managing their own independent accommodation and looking for alternative accommodation e.g. move to a different area.
- Seven applications were inactive or historic. They had not had any bids for properties at all/over a year, some of these applications had been penalised with priority band reductions for there has been requests for information and no contact over a period of time. These applicants had a valid need for housing and in some cases housing with support, some of them had chaotic pattern of approaches to the council when they periodically had a housing crisis. These young people may approach us again or equally have resolved their housing problems. In ascertaining the current immediate demand for supported Foyer style housing, to ensure we are not overstating need, these applicants were discounted.
- Six applications came from residents of supported housing/hostels (MYST, a probation hostel and the Bridge). They were looking for 'move on' independent housing. These applicants may require assistance or support in managing independent accommodation and may have required supported housing such as a foyer scheme in the past; however they are now looking to move onwards to independent rather than need supported housing.
- Two of the remaining applicants were working full time, living with their family and had no clear need for support. These applicants were struggling to find affordable homes to rent in the private sector themselves but did not have any identifiable need for support. These were also discounted. A third applicant was also employed full time as well as having potential support needs, unfortunately the cost of foyer type supported accommodation without housing benefit support meant that it is unlikely to be suitable form of support for this applicant and therefore they were also discounted from the analysis.

3.9 There were twelve remaining applications. They all had a high need for housing as their current housing situation was insecure.

- 3.10 The majority of young people on the housing register do not appear to require supported housing. Just over half of young applicants are families with children/pregnant (53%). Discounting single person households which fell into the below categories (that would not normally be suitable for foyer accommodation) there were just twelve potential single young people on the housing register who could potentially benefit from a foyer type project. This particular group would be supported by the new officer.
- 3.11 Discounted households
- Families with children or pregnant
 - Couples
 - Existing council tenant
 - Not holding an active application (to prevent over estimating need)
 - Already in hostel/supported accommodation and on housing register to secure 'move on' independent accommodation
 - Other households where a foyer style supported accommodation home would not be suitable or required such as those in full time employment.
- 3.12 It is noted that the housing register is one source of data regarding housing needs, and that alone it should not be considered as fully reflective of housing issues of young people, it simply reflects the young people who have approached the council for assistance with housing.
- 3.13 Assuming existing supported housing and hostel services continued to run and accommodate young people in similar numbers to what they have, the new role would support the housing needs of those that would have been housed at the Foyer.
- 3.14 The new Homelessness Prevention Bill will add extra pressure to our existing housing resources. The new legislation will require us to implement the following legislative changes.
- Period where an applicant is threatened with homelessness increases from 28 days to 56 days. Therefore we will be working with applicants much longer.
 - Increase the amount of advice and support to those facing homelessness including specific information for care leavers and victims of domestic abuse.
 - We must carry out an assessment of all cases where an applicant is homeless or at risk of being homeless. This includes a detailed action plan on how the Council will assist the applicant with their Housing Options. "These steps should be tailored to the applicants needs and should be reasonable and achievable for each individual; applicant"
 - A new "Non Cooperation" clause. Where a person "deliberately and unreasonably refuses" to co-operate with the required steps in their individual action plan the Council may issue a series of warning letters as part of a escalation policy.
 - Extend Homelessness prevention so help is provided at an earlier stage regardless of the applicant's priority need status.
 - Support applicants where the applicant is homeless, this now includes the provision of a rent deposit, specific financial support, family mediation services etc.

- “Help to Secure” is a new scheme which means we must support and advise households who are wanting to secure their own accommodation. This includes an assessment of the affordability, the size, the location, its condition. There is a duty for the Council to check if there is a valid energy performance certificate, a carbon monoxide detector and whether the landlord is a “fit & proper” person.
- Provide each homeless applicant with a full range of housing choices including a full list of hostels & Bed & Breakfast accommodation rather than us sending them to our choice of temporary accommodation.

3.15 2017 is going to be a busy year for the Housing Options team. We need to build resilience within the team and support those residents facing homelessness. The new role will provide a dedicated focus on the housing choices for young people and ensure the Council meets its obligations of the new Homelessness Prevention Bill.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Although there are no direct policy and corporate implications arising from this report. Effective use of existing resources coupled with the support from external agencies aim to mitigate the overall impact of homelessness.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Over the last 2 years there has been considerable financial pressure on the homelessness budget. The use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation, whilst always the last resort, is expensive. However there continues to be a need to use this form of temporary accommodation due to the lack of available alternative properties. During 2016/17 the number of homeless cases and subsequent use of B&B accommodation has reduced slightly, however there is a predicted forecast of an overspend of £21k on homelessness, however, this has been met from underspends elsewhere within budgets in the Communities & Neighbourhoods Service.. Monthly monitoring of this budget continues

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 There are currently no legal implications directly arising from this report. We will consider any implications of the new homeless legislation in the future.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no community safety issues with regard to the recommendations in this report.


8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 No initial equalities issues have been identified

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The risks are considered in the table below

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C			2,3	
Low D		1		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic



Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	Prospective tenants cannot access affordable housing.
2	Unable to meet the implications of the Homelessness Prevention Bill
3	Increase in young people becoming homeless

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change issues directly arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATIONS

11.1 Consultation has taken place with internal staff, Leicestershire District Council and the Leicestershire Citizen Advice Bureau.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All wards which contain Council properties are affected.

Contact Officer: Mark Shields
 Date: 8th March 2017
 Appendices: None

